

CHAPTER VI

THE VISION OF THE CROSS AND THE EDICT OF MILAN

IT was during the course of the successful invasion of Italy, which culminated in the battle of the Milvian Bridge and the capture of Rome, that there took place — or was said to have taken place — the famous vision of the cross, surrounded by the words, "Conquer by This," which accompanied the triumph of Constantine's arms. There are two main authorities for the legend, Eusebius and Lactantius, both, of course, Christians and uncompromising champions of Constantine, with whom they were in close personal contact. A third, though he makes no mention of the cross, is Nazarius, the author of the Tenth Panegyric. The variations which subsequent writers introduce into the story relate merely to details, or are obvious embroideries upon an original legend, such, for example, as the statement of Philostorgius that the words of promise around the cross were written in stars. We need not trouble, therefore, with the much later versions of Sozomen, Socrates, Gregory of Nazianzen, and Nicephorus; it will be enough to study the more or less